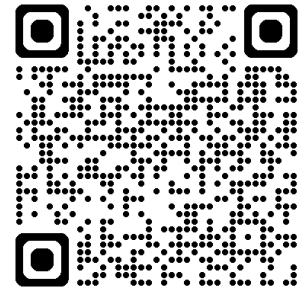


A castle town weighs the cost of progress



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20250918063851078/>

Japan's castles rank among the country's most popular tourist spots. Symbols of its samurai past, they draw visitors from around the world. But as we see in our next report, a castle town in western Japan is caught between preserving this cultural heritage and moving forward.

Matsue Castle stands not far from the center of the city in Shimane Prefecture. Completed in 1611, it is one of the 12 remaining original castles nationwide. It was designated as a national treasure a decade ago. Tourists from both inside and outside Japan come to experience a slice of history.

It was much more beautiful than I expected.

Yeah the view was very beautiful.

But now the castle is facing an uncertain outlook. Just 200 meters away, construction is under way on a 19-story apartment building at 57 meters high, it will be taller than the castle. Some residents are protesting, saying that it will damage the city skyline. Architect Teramoto Kazuo is one of them. He's been involved in public works projects in Matsue for over 40 years.

Matsue Castle is the city's foremost symbol, and the significance will be drastically diminished. I believe we must put the breaks on to stop Matsue from losing its uniqueness.

Teramoto and others have collected more than 18,000 signatures for a petition demanding a halt to construction. But the developer hasn't changed its plans saying they have already been approved by the

city. Now the outcry from residents is forcing officials to rethink the city's approach. Until now, height restrictions were only enforced for a limited area around the castle, but efforts are under way to change that. The city plans to designate 9 viewpoints that have historical significance and a clear view of the castle. If a new building threatens to obstruct the view from one of these spots, the city will request the developer to change its plans. But balancing urban renewal with preserving the traditional landscape continues to pose a challenge.

If we regulate too much, it might cause the local economy to stagnate. We have to consider the pros and cons and compare the impact of each while striving to preserve and shape Matsue's unique landscape. While the city rushes to revise its regulation, the apartment block is scheduled to be completed next summer. The skyline of this old castle town will never be the same again. The question for Matsue now is how much further it is willing to change.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Which do you feel is more important, preserving the views of the castle or developing the city?
2. Has there ever been construction in a city you lived in that you disagreed with?
3. What do you think makes a city beautiful?
4. If you were a tourist, would you care about the city skyline when visiting a castle?
5. Have you ever visited a place where the old and new buildings were mixed? What did you think?